



Critical Thinking Skills Activity

Making Comparisons

SOCIAL STUDIES OBJECTIVE: Analyze information by comparing and contrasting.



Learning the Skill

When you **make comparisons**, you look at how two things are alike and how they are different. By thinking about, or *weighing*, the similarities and differences between two countries, cultures, or climates, you can make more

informed judgments and choices. To make comparisons, follow these steps:

- Identify or decide what will be compared.
- Determine a common area or areas in which comparisons can be drawn.
- Look for similarities and differences within these areas.

Applying the Skill

Directions: Look at the chart comparing the various elements of the Mayan and Aztec cultures. Then answer the questions that follow.

	Maya	Aztec
Way of Life	People lived in small settlements scattered throughout the countryside. Large cities were religious centers and had no permanent inhabitants. Almost all Maya were farmers.	warrior society; highly developed military organization; farming was the basis of the economy; well populated cities
Religion	worshiped rain gods, gods of soil, sun god, corn god; believed all gods and humans descended from the sun and moon	main god—god of war and sun—demanded constant war and human sacrifice; other gods were rain god, god of wind, god of learning
Government	not much known about their system of government; probably each large city controlled the area around it	well-organized government; emperor had supreme power over everyone
Education	Children learned at home from their parents.	Education was controlled by the priests. Most children learned history, Aztec traditions, and crafts. Some attended special schools to learn official religious duties.

(Chart continued on next page.)

MEXICO

Critical Thinking Skills Activity (continued)

	Maya	Aztec
Art and Science	advanced system of mathematics; accurate calendar; most advanced system of writing among Native Americans; writing was similar to hieroglyphics. Principal architecture was high stone pyramids with small temples on top.	flat-topped pyramids with temples on top resembled Mayan architecture; had no alphabet; used system of pictures and symbolic characters

1. In what way were the religious beliefs of the Maya and Aztec alike? How were they different?

2. In what way was city life different in the Mayan and Aztec cultures?

3. Which society do you think had more rules to keep it organized? Explain the reason for your answer.

Practicing the Skill

Directions: Answer the following questions by circling the letter of the correct answer.

1. Based on the chart, which of the following statements about the Maya is NOT accurate?

- A. They lived in small settlements.
- B. Their writing was similar to hieroglyphics.
- C. They worshiped several different gods.
- D. The children were taught in schools.

2. Based on the chart, which of the following statements about the Aztec is NOT accurate?

- A. They had a well-organized government.
- B. They developed an advanced system of mathematics.
- C. They were a warrior society.
- D. They had no alphabet.

3. Which of the following was NOT a god worshipped by the Maya or Aztec?

- A. rain god
- B. sun god
- C. god of peace
- D. god of war